

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 3 MOSCOW 16100

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, UR, US

SUBJECT: THE CURRENT SOVIET VIEW OF US-SOVIET RELATIONS

REF: STATE 261650

1. SUMMARY. THERE HAS BEEN A DISTINCT COOLING IN SOVIET MEDIA TREATMENT OF THE U.S. IN THE PAST SEVERAL MONTHS, COUPLES WITH GREATER EMPHASIS ON SOVIET RELATIONS WITH THE SOCIALIST CAMP AND ON MOSCOW'S CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE WORLD "PROGRESSIVE" AND "NATIONAL LIBERATION" MOVEMENTS. ALTHOUGH THERE ARE OTHER POSSIBLE EXPLANATIONS, WE ATTRIBUTE THIS LARGELY TO SOVIET DISAPPOINTMENT AT RECENT DEVELOPMENTS IN THE INTERNATIONAL AND BILATERAL SPHERES, INCLUDING MOST NOTABLY WESTERN BACKLASH ON CSCE, EXCLUSION FROM LATEST MIDDLE EAST DISENGAGEMENT, AND DELAY IN CONVERTING VLADIVOSTOK AGREEMENT INTO SALT II TREATY. IF WE ARE INDEED IN A PRESUCCESSION PHASE, THEN BREZHNEV'S UPCOMING DEMISE MIGHT ALSO HAVE PLAYED A ROLE IN THIS CHANGED EMPHASIS, BUT WE SEE NO CLEAR EVIDENCE TO SUPPORT SUCH A SUPPOSITION. WHAT IS EVIDENT TO US IS THAT THE SOVIETS ARE UNCERTAIN ABOUT CURRENT DEVELOPMENTS IN THE U.S., APPREHENSIVE ABOUT WHAT THEY CONSIDER TO BE THE GROWING CHORUS OF ANTI-SOVIET AND ANTI-DETENTE SENTIMENTS BEING EXPRESSED THERE, AND WORRIED ABOUT THE IMPACT WHICH OUR ELECTION CAMPAIGN MAY HAVE ON U.S.-SOVIET RELATIONS. A SALTII AGREEMENT AND A WASHINGTON SUMMIT WOULD, HOWEVER, BRING RELATIONS BACK TO A MORE EVEN KEEL. IF BREZHNEV IS TO MAKE THE TRIP TO WASHINGTON, THIS WOULD IMPLY AN INTENTION TO CONTINUE HIM IN POWER FOR

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SOME TAIME AFTER A MEETING, SINCE A LAME DUCK SUMMIT WOULD MAKE

LITTLE SENSE FROM THE SOVIET POINT OF VIEW. IN ANY CASE, WE MAY WELL BE MOVING INTO A PERIOD OF UNCERTAINTY, WHICH MIGHT ALSO IN THE LONG RUN TURN OUT TO BE A PERIOD OF HISTORIC OPPORTUNITY. END SUMMARY.

2. THE MEDIA. WE DETECT A PERCEPTIBLE COOLING OVER THE PAST SEVERAL MONTHS IN THE RELATIVE STRESS IN THE SOVIET MEDIA ON THE IMPORTANCE OF DETENTE AND U.S.-SOVIET RELATIONS. CONCOMITANTLY, HEAVY COVERAGE OF RECENT SOVIET EFFORTS TO CONSOLIDATE THEIR POSITION WITHIN "THE SOCIALIST CAMP" HAS BEEN MARKED. IN ADDITION, MORE EMPHASIS HAS BEEN PLACED ON THE KREMLIN'S SUPPORT FOR "NATIONAL LIBERATION" MOVEMENTS AND ON THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE SOVIET CONTRIBUTION TO SUCH MOVEMENTS. THE SOVIETS' PUBLIC POSITION TOWARD THE MIDDLE EAST HAS RECENTLY TOUGHENED AND CRITICISM OF THE U.S. ROLE THERE, BOTH IMPLICIT AND EXPLICIT, HAS INCREASED. TREATMENT OF CHINA, ALWAYS HARD, HAS GOTTEN HARDER. THE FIGHTING IN ANGOLA HAS OCCASIONED INCREASINGLY FREQUENT CHARGES OF U.S.-CHINESE COLLUSION AS HAVE VARIOUS STATEMENTS BY CHINESE LEADERS THAT MOSCOW IS LESS TRUSTWORTHY THAN WASHINGTON. IMPLICIT CONTRAST HAS BEEN DRAWN BETWEEN THE SECRETARY'S TRIP TO PEKING AS COMPARED WITH THAT OF GERMAN CHANCELLOR SCHMIDT IN THAT SCHMIDT'S DEFENSE OF DETENTE AGAINST CHINESE ATTACKS WAS JUXTAPOSED AGAINST WHAT THE LOCAL MEDIA PORTRAYED AS THE SECRETARY'S SILENCE ON THIS SUBJECT. COVERAGE OF THE U.S. ITSELF, TEMPORARILY BRIGHTENED BY APOLLO-SOYUZ AND THE ASTRONAUTS' TRIPS, HAS RECENTLY TENDED MORE AND MORE TO DIGGING AND JABBING IN INNUMERABLE PETTY WAYS.

3. WHILE DETENTE WITH THE WEST RETAINS ITS THEORETICAL PRIMACY, EXPRESSION OF SUPPORT FOR IT IS NOW USUALLY ACCOMPANIED BY WORRIED SORTIES AGAINST DETENTE'S WESTERN ENEMIES OR THEIR CHINESE HELPMATES. THE DRUMBEATING FOR "MILITARY DETENTE" AS A NEXT STEP IN THE PROCESS, INTENDED AS A MAJOR POST-HELSINKI PROPAGANDA THEME, HAS BEEN BROUGHT UP SHORT BY THE UNEXPECTED BACKLASH AGAINST CSCE. TREATMENT OF CSCE
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ITSELF HAS TURNED CONSISTENTLY DEFENSIVE AND SOMETIMES SURLY. DETENTE IS NOW USUALLY PAIRED WITH THE NEED FOR ATTENTION TO THE "WORLD SOCIALIST SYSTEM" AND THE "WORLD COMMUNIST AND WORKERS' MOVEMENT."

4. THE TROUBLED GISCARD VISIT RECEIVED ONLY MODERATE AND CORRECT MEDIA TREATMENT AND WAS FAR OVERSHADOWED BY THE PLAY GIVEN TO HONECKER AND LE DUAN. EVEN

HUNGARIAN PREMIER LAZAR LOOKED GOOD IN GISCARD'S WAKE. THE RECEPTION FOR LE DUAN WAS LAVISH IN ITS SYMBOLIZATION OF THE SOVIET CONTRIBUTION TO "PROGRESSIVE" FORCES AS WELL AS NATIONAL LIBERATION MOVEMENTS EVERYWHERE. DURING THE VISIT THE PAGES OF PRAVDA WERE OPENED TO THE KIND OF ANTI-AMERICAN STATEMENTS BY LE DUAN THAT WE HAVE NOT SEEN IN THE SOVIET PRESS IN SEVERAL YEARS. DETENTE EMERGED A VERY POOR SISTER IN THE PROCESS.

5. ON THE OTHER HAND, THERE HAS BEEN LITTLE NOTICEABLE SLACKENING OF SOVIET LIP SERVICE TO THE OVERALL CONCEPT OF DETENTE. THE PEACE POLICY OF THE 24TH CONGRESS IS STILL SINGLED OUT AS A LANDMARK. VARIOUS STATEMENTS BY U.S. GOVERNMENT LEADERS AND OTHER AMERICANS ON THE IMPORTANCE OF U.S.- SOVIET RELATIONS HAVE RECEIVED PROMINENT SPACE IN THE PAGES OF THE CENTRAL PRESS. DETENTE, THE KREMLIN CONTINUES TO MAINTAIN, BUT IN A MORE TROUBLED TONE, MUST BE MADE "IRREVERSIBLE", (PERHAPS SYMBOLIC OF THE IMPORTANCE STILL ACCORDED TO U.S.-SOVIET RELATIONS IS THE RECENT ELEVATION OF KORNIYENKO, HEAD OF THE USA DIVISION OF THE FOREIGN MINISTRY, TO THE RANK OF DEPUTY FOREIGN MINISTER).

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6. DIRECT CRITICISM OF THE U.S. IN THE PRESS HAS
EXTENDED BEYOND THE USUAL SNIPING AT THE ILLS OF

AMERICAN SOCIETY--UNEMPLOYMENT, CRIME, RACIAL PROBLEMS, ETC. -- TO INCLUDE FUNDAMENTAL QUESTIONS REGARDING THE INHERENT STRENGTH OF "ANTI-SOVIET" POLITICAL FORCES WITHIN THE UNITED STATES. IN PUBLIC AND PRIVATE THE SOVIETS HAVE BEEN POINTING WITH CONCERN AT WHAT THEY SEE AS A RISING CHORUS OF UNJUSTIFIABLE ANTI-SOVIET CRITICISM. THEY ARE WORRIED AT THE EFFECT SUCH CRITICISM MAY HAVE ON DISARMAMENT NEGOTIATIONS AND DETENTE AS A WHOLE AND FEAR THAT OUR UPCOMING ELECTION CAMPAIGN COULD LEAD TO A FURTHER EXACERBATION OF RELATIONS. WHILE SUCH STATEMENTS ARE AT LEAST IN PART SELF-SERVING, THEY HAVE BECOME SO FREQUENT AND SO POINTED THAT THEY RAISE LEGITIMATE QUESTIONS AS TO WHETHER WE MAY BE IN FOR A SWITCH IN EMPHASIS IN SOVIET POLICY. THIS COULD CONCEIVABLY BE SEEN AS PART OF A PERIOD OF UNCERTAINTY PRECEDING BREZHNEV'S DEPARTURE FOR VALHALLA, ALTHOUGH THE EVIDENCE IS FAR FROM CLEAR ON THIS.

7. OUR OWN VIEW, HOWEVER, IS THAT THE CHANGE OF EMPHASIS DESCRIBED ABOVE HAS BEEN LARGELY DETERMINED BY CONCRETE DEVELOPMENTS IN THE INTERNATIONAL SPHERE IN RECENT MONTHS. THE OVERALL FOREIGN POLICY LINE DOES NOT SEEM TO US TO BE IN QUESTION. SUSLOV LECTURED THE SENATORS ON IT THIS SUMMER; GROMYKO GAVE A CLEAR INDICATION OF THE LEADERSHIP'S INTENTION TO WRITE IT CONFIDENTIAL

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INTO THE RECORD OF THE 25TH CONGRESS IN HIS SEPTEMBER KOMMUNIST ARTICLE; BREZHNEV REAFFIRMED IT AT HELSINKI AND IN HIS TOAST TO GISCARD OCTOBER 15; AND THE MEDIA PROMOTE IT WITH INCESSANT VIGOR. THE IMPORTANCE OF THIS "GENERAL LINE" IN THIS HIERARCHICAL AND BUREAUCRATIC SOCIETY SHOULD NOT BE UNDERESTIMATED.

8. A LIST OF SOVIET GRIEVANCES. BUT BREZHNEV'S DISAPPOINTMENT AT THE WAY THINGS HAVE WORKED OUT SINCE HELSINKI SEEMS APPARENT. HE CLEARLY HAD A DUAL-TRACK MASTER PLAN WHICH CALLED FOR CONCENTRATION AFTER HELSINKI ON MILITARY DETENTE IN POST-CSCE SOVIET RELATIONS WITH THE WEST AND, SIMULTANEOUSLY, DEVOTION OF MORE TIME TO CEMENTING RELATIONS WITHIN THE COMMUNIST MOVEMENT. HIS TIMETABLE CALLED FOR RUNNING UP TO THE 25TH CONGRESS ALONG BOTH FOREIGN POLICY TRACKS--I.E., HE HOPED TO SYMBOLIZE THE TRIUMPH OF HIS "PEACE POLICY" BY HAVING SUCCESSFULLY ACHIEVED A SALT AGREEMENT AND A WASHINGTON SUMMIT, ON THE ONE HAND, AS WELL AS AN ECPC CONFERENCE ON THE OTHER. WHATEVER SUCCESS THE SOVIETS HAVE HAD, HOWEVER, HAS THUS FAR ONLY BEEN ALONG ONE OF THESE TRACKS. FOR THIS THEY LARGELY BLAME THE US AND THE WEST EUROPEANS, WHOM THEY SEE AS HAVING SABOTAGED THE ERA OF GOOD FEELING THAT WAS TO HAVE BEEN USHERED IN AFTER HELSINKI. A LIST OF SOVIET GRIEVANCES WOULD INCLUDE:

A. CSCE BACKLASH. FROM THE VERY BEGINNING, THE SOVIETS WERE UNEASY ABOUT THE FORD ADMINISTRATION AND THIS UNEASINESS HAS BEEN FED AND COMPOUNDED BY THREE MAJOR SURPRISES DURING THE PAST YEAR. THE FIRST WAS THE TOTALLY UNEXPECTED WAVE OF CRITICISM IN THE U.S. AGAINST THE VLADIVOSTOK AGREEMENT. THE SECOND WAS THE FAILURE OF THE "VLADIVOSTOK SPIRIT" TO HAVE ANY APPRECIABLE IMPACT ON THE TRADE/EMIGRATION IMPASSE. THE THIRD HAS BEEN THE UNEXPECTED BACKLASH AGAINST CSCE IN THE UNITED STATES AND WESTERN EUROPE AND THE CONSEQUENT BASIC QUESTIONING OF THE VALUE OF DETENTE BY MORE AND MORE PEOPLE WITHIN AMERICAN SOCIETY. IN ANY CASE, THIS POST-CSCE BACKLASH HAS CLEARLY THROWN A MONKEYWRENCH INTO THE SOVIET SCENARIO WHICH CALLED FOR A TRIUMPHAL CSCE CULMINATION LEADING UP TO AN EQUALLY TRIUMPHAL REAFFIRMATION OF DETENTE AT THE 25TH CONGRESS.

B. THE MIDDLE EAST. THE SOVIETS ARE ALSO DISTURBED THAT
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THEY HAVE BEEN FROZEN OUT OF THE LATEST PEACE AGREEMENT IN THE MIDDLE EAST AND HAVE COMPLAINED THAT THEY ARE NOT BEING CUT INTO THE ACTION -- AS THEY THINK THEY SHOULD BE WITHIN THE FRAMEWORK OF A DETENTE RELATIONSHIP -- IN WHAT THEY CONSIDER TO BE A VITAL AREA. THE DIRECT ATTACKS BY SADAT IMPUGNING SOVIET MOTIEVS AND DISPARAGING THEIR AID WERE CLEARLY REGARDED HERE AS A CHALLENGE. THE SOVIETS MAY WELL FEEL THAT SADAT'S DISTRESSING BARBS COULD PERHAPS HAVE BEEN AVOIDED IF WASHINGTON HAD INFORMED THE EGYPTIAN PRESIDENT THAT SUCH BLATANT ANTI-SOVIET BAITING WOULD BE UNWISE.

C. PORTUGAL. HACKLES HAVE ALSO BEEN RAISED IN THE KREMLIN BY CONSISTENT ALLEGATIONS IN THE WEST THAT THE SOVIETS HAVE BEEN VIOLATING THE RULES OF DETENTE BY THEIR ACTIONS IN PORTUGAL. MOSCOW'S VIEW IS THAT, ON THE CONTRARY, IT HAS BEEN OPERATING WITHIN DETENTE GUIDELINES AND HAS BEEN DOING LITTLE WHICH COULD BE DESCRIBED HONESTLY AS DIRECT INTERFERENCE IN LISBON'S INTERNAL AFFAIRS OR AS IMPERILLING DETENTE. POLITICAL AND FINANCIAL SUPPORT TO A FOREIGN CP IS, IN THEIR VIEW, PERFECTLY LEGITIMATE, AND THEY PROBABLY CONCEDE OURRIGHT TO DO THE SAME IN RESPECT TO OUR FRIENDS, EVEN THOUGH THE LATTER WOULD BE CONSIDERED GRIST FOR THE PROPAGANDA MILL.)

D. CHINA. THE SOVIETS PROBABLY NOW REGARD THEIR RELATIONS WITH CHINA AND ITS EFFECT THROUGHOUT THE COMMUNIST AND THIRD WORLD AS THEIR MOST IMPORTANT FOREIGN POLICY PROBLEM. THEY ARE DEEPLY WORRIED THAT

WE MAY BE MANEUVERING TO HAVE CHINA BECOME ALMOST AN ALLY OF THE U.S. THE SOVIETS FEEL THAT AT THE VERY LEAST A DETENTE RELATIONSHIP SHOULD ENSURE EQUAL TREATMENT OF MOSCOW AND PEKING. THEY ARE THEREFORE PROBABLY DISTURBED AT THE SECRETARY'S RECENT VISIT TO CHINA AND THE PRESIDENT'S UPCOMING ONE.

E. BILATERAL IRRITANTS. SOVIET AGRICULTURAL DIFFICULTIES HAVE UNDOUBTEDLY CAUSED THEM INTERNAL POLITICAL PROBLEMS, AS TESTIFIED TO BY THEIR FAILURE TO PUBLICIZE THE LONG-TERM GRAIN AGREEMENT WITH THE U.S. OUR ATTEMPTS TO USE THIS GRAIN DEAL AS A LEVER TO EXTRACT SIGNIFICANT PRICE CON-
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CESSIONS ON SOVIET OIL, ALTHOUGH UNDERSTANDABLE, WAS UNDOUBTEDLY THE SUBJECT OF HEATED POLITBURO DISCUSSION, AND MAY HAVE RESULTED IN SOME REAL RESENTMENT. A WHOLE RANGE OF OTHER BILATERAL IRRITANTS -- SOMETIMES PETTY, SOMETIMES LESS SO -- CONTINUE TO TROUBLE THE SOVIETS. AMONG THEM ARE DIFFICULTIES REGARDING VISAS, SOME OF WHICH THE SOVIETS HAVE REAL DIFFICULTY IN UNDERSTANDING. OUR FAILURE TO ALLOW A CPSU DELEGATION TO ATTEND THE AMERICAN COMMUNIST PARTY CONGRESS, FOR EXAMPLE, DESPITE PLEAS AT VERY HIGH LEVELS, UNDOUBTEDLY GALLED THE SOVIETS. EQUALLY IMPORTANT IN THIS REGARD HAS BEEN OUR FAILURE TO MOVE AHEAD ON CONSTRUCTION OF BOTH EMBASSY PROJECTS.

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F. SALT AND MBFR. MOST IMPORTANT OF ALL, THE EXPECTED PROGRESS IN U.S.-SOVIET DISARMAMENT NEGOTIATIONS, WHICH WAS INTENDED TO MOVE DETENTE ALONG AND BRING BREZHNEV TO WASHINGTON IN TRIUMPH, HAS NOT BEEN FORTHCOMING. THE SOVIETS CONSIDER THAT THEY HAVE MADE LARGE CONCESSIONS AT SALT ON VERIFICATION WHICH HAVE BEEN NEITHER MATCHED NOR EVEN SUITABLY RECOGNIZED BY THE U.S. (WE CAN CONCEIVE OF NO SOVIET OFFICIALS WITH ANY VOICE IN THESE MATTERS, NO MATTER HOW GREAT HIS PERSONAL COMMITMENT TO DETENTE, WHO WOULD RECOMMEND THAT THE USSR SHOULD AGREE THAT LONG-RANGE CRUISE MISSILES SHOULD NOT BE CONSIDERED STRATEGIC WEAPONS OR THAT THE BACKFIRE BOMBER SHOULD BE WITHIN THE VLADIVOSTOK CEILING.) IN ADDITION, THE EXPECTED OFFER OF OPTION III IN MBFR HAS NOT TAKEN PLACE. WHILE SOVIET COMPLAINTS ABOUT LACK OF PROGRESS IN THESE MATTERS ARE CLEARLY SELF-SERVING, WE SUSPECT THAT MOSCOW IN FACT STRONGLY RESENTS BEING DRIVEN UP AGAINST ITS OWN CONGRESS DEADLINE BY ITS U.S. NEGOTIATING PARTNER. THE OTHER SOVIET GRIEVANCES, HOWEVER, PALE IN IMPORTANCE AS COMPARED TO THE ACHIEVEMENT OF A SECOND SALT AGREEMENT AND A SUCCESSFUL WASHINGTON SUMMIT. ACHIEVEMENT OF BOTH THESE OBJECTIVES WOULD ALMOST CERTAINLY RESTORE U.S.-SOVIET RELATIONS TO AN EVEN KEEL.

9. THE PARTY CONGRESS. ANOTHER FACTOR EXPLAINING INCREASING SOVIET PUBLIC COOLNESS TOWARD THE UNITED STATES IS THE PARTY CONGRESS ITSELF. ON PAST
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PERFORMANCE IT WAS PREDICTABLE THAT THE SOVIETS WOULD PAY MORE ATTENTION TO CONSOLIDATING AND GARNERING SUPPORT IN THE WORLD COMMUNIST MOVEMENT AS THEY PREPARED FOR THE CONGRESS. (THE HOMESTRETCH OF THE EUROPEAN COMMUNIST PARTY CONFERENCE WOULD ALSO PROBABLY HAVE OBLIGED THEM TO DO SO, EVEN IN THE ABSENCE OF ANY OTHER FACTOR.) IN THE PERIOD LEADING UP TO THE CONGRESS WE EXPECT TO SEE A NARROWING SOVIET FOCUS ON A SHRINKING NUMBER OF HIGH PRIORITY AREAS, WITH SOVIET DECISION-MAKING EFFICIENCY DECLINING AS THE CONGRESS APPROACHES. SUCH A FREEZING OF THE OVERALL FOREIGN POLICY PROCESS WILL PROBABLY BE HEIGHTENED IF WE ARE INDEED IN A PRESUCCESSION PERIOD, AS POSTULATED IN REFTEL.

10. THE BREZHNEV FACTOR. ALTHOUGH WE HAVE BEEN IMPRESSED BY AT LEAST SOME OF THE EVIDENCE ADDUCED IN REFTEL (A FULLER EXPOSITION OF OUR VIEWS WILL FOLLOW BY SEPTTEL), OUTWARD INDICATORS HERE ARE THAT BREZHNEV REMAINS

NUMBER ONE FOR THE PRESENT. HUGE PHOTOS OF HIM HAVE BEEN MOUNTED ALL OVER MOSCOW, FOR EXAMPLE, AS PART OF THE PREPARATION FOR THE 58TH OCTOBER AND HE CONTINUES TO RECEIVE DAILY ENCOMIUMS IN ALL MEDIA. EVEN IF HE IS SHORTLY TO STEP DOWN FROM THE TOP SPOT, WE REMAIN CONVINCED IT WOULD BE FOR HEALTH RATHER THAN FOR POLITICAL REASONS. HOWEVER, HIS REMOVAL FROM THE SCENE WOULD OBVIOUSLY COMPLICATE PLANS FOR THE WASHINGTON SUMMIT AS WELL AS FOR THE PARTY CONGRESS ITSELF. ON NEITHER OCCASION WOULD IT BE USEFUL FOR THE CPSU TO HAVE A LAME DUCK PRESIDING AND MAKING VITAL DECISIONS. WE THEREFORE EXPECT THAT AT THE NEXT CPSU/CC PLENUM, PRESUMABLY DECEMBER 1, THE SITUATION MAY BE SOMEWHAT CLARIFIED BY ANNOUNCEMENT OF THE MAIN SPEAKER AT THE CONGRESS AND ITS AGENDA. THIS SHOULD BE A FIRM INDICATOR OF BREZHNEV'S PLANS, OR, CONCEIVABLY, THE PLANS BEING MADE BY OTHERS FOR BREZHNEV.

11. IN ANY CASE, ALTHOUGH THERE ARE DIFFERENCES OF NUANCE (SUSLOV AND PODGORNYY, FOR EXAMPLE, SEEM TO TAKE A TOUGHER LINE THAN OTHERS TOWARD THE VALUE TO BE DERIVED FROM DETENTE), WE HAVE THUS FAR DISCERNED NO IDENTIFIABLE POLICY DIFFERENCES WITHIN THE POLITBURO WHICH WOULD SIGNIFY A LEADERSHIP STRUGGLE AND THEREFORE
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CONTINUE TO ASSUME THAT IF BREZHNEV IS REPLACED FOR HEALTH REASONS IT WILL BE BY A COLLEGIUM OF PARTY ELDERS CONSISTING OF KIRILENKO, PODGORNYY, KOSYGIN AND SUSLOV, RATHER THAN BY A YOUNGER LEADER. WE ALSO CONTINUE TO BELIEVE THAT THERE WOULD BE A GOOD POSSIBILITY OF BREZHNEV MOVING INTO SOME HONORARY POSITION AS A FACE-SAVING DEVICE WHEN THE TIME COMES FOR HIM TO STEP DOWN FROM OFFICE BUT THAT IF A REAL SHAKEUP IS IN STORE WE WOULD PROBABLY HAVE HAD SOME INKLING OF IT BY THIS TIME. IN ANY CASE, HE HAS HAD A BUSY OCTOBER, AND THE SCHEDULE SHAPING UP FOR THE BALANCE OF THE YEAR PROMISES TO BE EQUALLY BUSY (THE CEMA MEETING, THE POLISH CONGRESS OF DECEMBER 8, THE FIRST CUBAN CONGRESS AND POSSIBLY AN ECPC). HIS STAMINA, THEREFORE, IS LIKELY TO BE SUBJECTED TO A SEVERE TEST.

12. FUTURE PROSPECTS. IN THE CONTEXT OF OVERALL US-SOVIET RELATIONS, A FADING AWAY OF BREZHNEV AND HIS INFLUENCE WOULD ALMOST CERTAINLY RESULT IN INCREASING CAUTION ON THE PART OF THE SOVIET BUREAUCRACY DURING AN INTERIM PERIOD. TESTED AND TRIED SOVIET BUREAUCRATS WOULD UNDOUBTEDLY WAIT TO SEE WHICH WAY THE WIND WAS BLOWING BEFORE MAKING LONG-TERM COMMITMENTS FOR WHICH THEY WOULD BE HELD ACCOUNTABLE LATER. THERE WOULD ALSO PROBABLY BE A MARKED OBDURACY WITHIN THE SOVIET BUREAUCRACY, WHICH WOULD RESIST SUBSTANTIVE CONCESSIONS DESIGNED TO ENHANCE THE HISTORIC IMPORTANCE OF A LAME DUCK.

13. IN FACT, WE HAVE NOTED JUST SUCH A MARGINAL, BUT STILL PERCEPTIBLE, CHANGE IN OUR RECENT CONTACTS WITH THE SOVIET BUREAUCRACY ON A SERIES OF MATTERS - MOST MINOR - OVER THE PAST SEVERAL WEEKS. DECISIONMAKING, NORMALLY TORPID AT BEST, SEEMS TO BE EVEN SLOWER THAN USUAL AND IN SOME CASES WE HAVE RECEIVED NEGATIVE REPLIES WHEN WE EXPECTED POSITIVE ONES. THESE PHENOMENA COULD BE SATISFACTORILY EXPLAINED AWAY AS HAVING NO SPECIAL SIGNIFICANCE IN AND OF THEMSELVES. ALTERNATIVELY, THEY COULD BE ATTRIBUTED TO A SLIGHT COOLING OF US-SOVIET RELATIONS, TO PRE-CONGRESS RIGOR MORTIS, OR PERHAPS TO THE FACT THAT WE ARE IN A PRE-SUCCESSION PERIOD. WHILE WE SEEM TO BE SOMEWHAT LESS CONVINCED THAN THE DEPARTMENT THAT THE LAST HURRAH IS IMMEDIATELY UPON US AND STRONGLY DOUBT THAT -- BARRING A COLLAPSE--THE GENERAL SECRETARY MIGHT BE STEPPING DOWN OR MIGHT BE MOVED OUT EVEN BEFORE THE CONGRESS, BREZHNEV'S
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AGE AND PHYSICAL CONDITION MAKE IT PROBABLE THAT 1976, HIS 70TH YEAR, WILL BE HIS LAST IN POWER. THUS, EVEN IF THE DANCE OF SUCCESSION HAS NOT YET ACTUALLY BEGUN, ALL THE DANCERS CAN HEAR THE MUSIC PLAYING JUST OUTSIDE THE ROOM. THIS LENDS EVEN MORE IMPORTANCE, WE WOULD ARGUE, TO ACHIEVING A SATISFACTORY SAL AGREEMENT AND TO ARRANGING A SUCCESSFUL WASHINGTON SUMMIT WHILE THIS CURRENT LEADERSHIP IS IN A POSITION TO INFLUENCE THE NEXT ONE, AND THE 25TH CPSU CONGRESS MAY BE CRUCIAL IN THIS RESPECT.

14. WE ARE, IN ANY CASE, CLEARLY MOVING INTO A TIME OF TRANSITION. LIKE ALL SUCH PERIODS, IT COULD BE ONE OF HISTORIC OPPORTUNITY. THUS, ARBATOV'S METAPHOR (MOSCOW 15952) THAT WE HAVE NOW REACHED A TIME WHEN A "WINDOW" MAY BE BRIEFLY OPENING IN OUR RELATIONS -- JUST AS A WINDOW OPENS FOR A PLANETARY PROBE AND THEN CLOSES AGAIN--MAY BE ENTIRELY APT.
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